

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast February 1, 2007

Thank you all. Thank you very much. Now will you please join me in singing “The Eyes of Texas.” [*Laughter*]

Good morning. Laura and I are honored to join you here at the 55th National Prayer Breakfast. You know, it’s an amazing country, isn’t it, when people from all walks of life gather to recognize our dependence on an Almighty God, and to ask Him for blessings in our life. I think a breakfast such as this speaks to the true strength of the United States of America.

We come from many different faiths, yet we share this profound conviction: We believe that God listens to the voice of His children and pours His grace upon those who seek Him in prayer. I appreciate, Mr. Congressman, you and Jo Ann Davis for leading this prayer breakfast. And thanks for paying tribute to my wife.

I appreciate the Speaker’s presence, Congressman Hoyer’s presence, Congressman Blunt’s presence. I want to thank all the Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives who have joined us. I appreciate the fact that we’ve got Governors here, local officials, and State officials. I thank the members of my Cabinet for joining us. Don’t linger, you’ve got a job to do. [*Laughter*] I thank the military officials who have joined us, distinguished dignitaries. Mr. Prime Minister, we are glad you’re here. Thank you for joining us.

I appreciate Dr. Collins. I want to thank Reverend Mucci and his wife Kathy. I appreciate Nicole Mullen. But most of all, thank you all.

We are a nation of prayer; America prays. Each day, millions of our citizens bow their heads in silence and solitude, or they offer up prayers in fellowship with others. They pray for themselves; they pray for their families; they pray for their neighbors and their communities. In many congregations and homes across this great land,

people also set a time—set aside time to pray for our Nation and those entrusted with authority, including our elected leaders.

In my travels, I often see hand-printed signs and personal messages from citizens that carry words of prayer. Sometimes it’s a single little girl holding up a placard that reads: “Mr. President, be encouraged; you are prayed for.” Sometimes it’s a banner held by a group of young people that says, “We are praying for you, Mr. President.” I often hear similar words when I meet people on a ropeline. Isn’t that interesting? You’re working a ropeline and people come up and say, “Mr. President, I am praying for you and your family.”

The greatest gift a citizen of this country can give those of us entrusted with political office is to pray for us. And I thank those in our Nation who lift all of us up in prayer.

Our troops must understand that every day—every day—millions of our citizens lift them up in prayer. We pray for their safety; we pray for their families they have left at home; we pray for those who have been wounded, for their comfort and recovery. We remember those who have been lost, and we pray that their loved ones feel the healing touch of the Almighty. During this time of war, we thank God that we are part of a nation that produces courageous men and women who volunteer to defend us.

Many in our country know the power of prayer. Prayer changes hearts, prayer changes lives, and prayer makes us a more compassionate and giving people. When we pray, we surrender our will to the Almighty and open ourselves up to His priorities and His touch. His call to love our neighbors as we would like to be loved ourselves is something that we hear when we pray. And we answer that call by reaching out to feed

the hungry and clothe the poor and aid the widow and the orphan. By helping our brothers and sisters in need, we find our own faith strengthened and we receive the grace to lead lives of dignity and purpose.

We see this grace in the life of a young American named Shannon Hickey. Shannon was one of Laura's guests at the State of the Union. When Shannon was growing up, her favorite priest was Father Mychal Judge, a chaplain with the New York City Fire Department. Father Mychal helped Shannon and her family through Shannon's struggle with liver disease. On September the 11th, 2001, Father Mychal lost his life in the World Trade Center. In memory of her friend, Shannon founded Mychal's Message, a nonprofit organization dedicated to sharing Father Mychal's loving spirit. Over the last 5 years, Mychal's Message has collected and distributed more than 100,000 needed items to the poor and the homeless. With each gift to the needy, Shannon encloses a card with Father Mychal's personal prayer. It reads: "Lord, take me where you want me to go, let

me meet who you want me to meet, tell me what you want me to say, and keep me out of your way." [Laughter]

Father Mychal's humble prayer reminds us of an eternal truth: In the quiet of prayer, we leave behind our own cares, and we take up the cares of the Almighty. And in answering His call to service, we find that, in the words of Isaiah: "We will gain new strength. We will run and not get tired. We will walk and not become weary."

And so I thank you for joining us on this day of prayer. I thank you for the tradition you continue here today. And I ask for God's blessings on the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 a.m. at the Hilton Washington Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II of Missouri; Prime Minister Said Musa of Belize; Francis S. Collins, director, National Human Genome Research Institute; Rev. Dan Mucci, Jr., senior pastor, Abundant Life Church, Glen Burnie, MD, and his wife Kathy; and entertainer Nicole C. Mullen.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting on Childhood Obesity *February 1, 2007*

The President. Laura and I are so pleased to welcome the Ad Council, as well as leaders from our business community, to talk about a serious American problem, and that is childhood obesity.

Childhood obesity is a costly problem for the country. It puts stress on American families. And we believe it is necessary to come up with a coherent strategy to help folks all throughout our society cope with the issue. And I appreciate the Secretary being here. Thanks for coming, Mr. Secretary.

We'll discuss—one of the strategies is to have the Ad Council put on an interesting series of ads encouraging children to exer-

cise. One way for this Nation to cope with the issue of obesity is to get people outside, whether it be through sports or hiking or conservation. So we'll encourage them to do that, encourage parents to encourage their children to participate in the great outdoors. We'll also talk about healthy diet choices here.

And so I want to thank you all for coming. It's a serious issue that we take seriously here at the Government.

Laura is off to New York to kick off the program to help deal with heart disease here. And you might want to say a few words.